



Newsletter of the Pendleton Bird Club

# Kákya Táymut

KUK-yuh TIE-moot, Umatilla Indian Translation: *Bird News*

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Volume 3, No. 3 Pendleton, Oregon March 2005

## *Pendleton Bird Club Field Trip to McNary Wildlife Area*

**ON MARCH 12, AARON SKIRVIN LED** 10 birders on a field trip to the McNary Wildlife Area. However before driving to the McNary area, Aaron decided to check out the area around Stanfield and Echo Meadows and Cold Springs NWR. This turned out to be a smart decision. After leaving Stanfield and crossing I-84, Nancy Brown alerted the group to a flock of **Sandhill Cranes**. This was the first of two flocks we found, and everyone had great views as small groups of Cranes continued to join and leave the larger flocks. In the same area, Becky Hiers spotted 6 **Long-billed Curlews** feeding in an irrigation circle. These were the first **Long-billed Curlews** found in the County this year. The ponds along Emert Roads provided views of several species of ducks including great looks at **Northern Pintails**. The group then drove to check out Cold Springs Reservoir. It was windy and cool at the Reservoir and most of the ducks, geese and swans were too far away to identify. However everyone got great looks at a mature **Bald Eagle**.

Aaron had to leave the group at Cold Springs, so Lyle and Nancy Brown took over as group leaders. The next stop was the Wanaket Wildlife area where the group got great looks at **Buffleheads** and a flock of **Greater White-fronted Geese**. The group then decided to go to the grain elevators above McNary Dam. Searching through a huge flock of **Greater and Lesser Scaup**, we were able to find several other species of ducks including several **Redheads** and the female **LONG-TAILED DUCK** that had been in this location for several weeks. The last stop was the McNary Wildlife Area and after all the great birding earlier in the day, this was somewhat disappointing. Many of the wintering ducks have left the ponds and **Common Goldeneye** was the most common species found in the river.

The next scheduled field trip is to Battle Mountain State Park On March 26. As anyone who has attended a PBC fieldtrip can tell you, the trips are always fun and we always manage to see a lot of great birds.

*Contributed by Dave Herr*

## **Little League Heronry Going Big League**

Since the heronry on the Pendleton River Parkway is across the river from the Little League Park, we often refer to it as the Little League Heronry. It had a modest beginning two years ago when foresighted herons built two successful nests. In 2004, the heronry doubled to four successful nests.

Now, in 2005, the heronry has definitely gone Big League! On March 11, there were nine completed nests and a tenth one being built. Nine nests seem to have pretty well filled one tree and the tenth nest is in a tree beside it. A pair of Great Blue Herons was diligently working on the new nest. They flew to the ground out of sight and returned with sticks. They spent some time working the sticks into the nest, making a sturdy understory. Seventeen herons were in the two trees at one time. They were coming and going, making it a little hard to count them. On March 9 and 11, a Great Egret was observed in a tree just south of the heronry. Could the Great Egret be taking lessons and thinking of building a nest also?

The heronry is easy to observe from the Parkway. Walk up the ramp from the Little League Park and look across the river. The best view is from the gazebo just downstream a short ways. As the trees leaf out, the nests will be harder to find. Future

updates will include the number of hatchlings and fledglings.

*Contributed by June Whitten and Marilyn Jio*

## Calendar of Events

### **Field Trip**

Saturday, March 26, 2005

#### **Battle Mountain State Park**

(possible joint field trip with Blue Mt. Audubon of Walla Walla)

Meet at 8:00 a.m. at the NE corner of the Pendleton Safeway Parking Lot  
Trip Leader: Dave Herr 276-6413

### **Pendleton Bird Club Meeting & Potluck**

Thursday, April 14, 2005 6:30 p.m.

Presentation by Karen Kronner

First Christian Church  
Pendleton, Oregon  
(Across from the Pendleton Arts Center)

### **Field Trip**

Saturday, April 23, 2005

#### **Tollgate Woodpecker Search**

Meet at 8:00 a.m. at the NE corner of the Pendleton Safeway Parking Lot  
Trip Leader: Dave Herr 276-6413

### **Malheur National Wildlife Refuge**

April 29 – May 2, 2005

June Whitten, Trip Coordinator 276-9019

### **Pendleton Bird Club Meeting**

Thursday, May 12, 2005 7:30 p.m.

Aaron Skirvin's presentation on  
IDing Spring Migrants

First Christian Church, N. Main, Pendleton, Oregon

### **Umatilla County Spring Migration Count**

Saturday, May 14, 2005

For further information, contact  
Aaron Skirvin 276-1948

### **Field Trip**

Saturday, May 21, 2005

#### **Battle Mountain, Ukiah, Albee**

Meet at 7:00 a.m. at the NE corner of the Pendleton Safeway Parking Lot  
Trip Leader: Aaron Skirvin 276-1948

### **Field Trip**

Saturday, June 4, 2005

#### **Birding in the Juniper Canyon – Stateline Wind Farm Area**

Meet at 7:00 a.m. at the NE corner of the Pendleton Safeway Parking Lot  
Trip Leader: Karen Kronner

## The Art of BMW

“ON THE WING” is an evening social event created to celebrate and support the work of Blue Mountain Wildlife. Held at the Pendleton Center for the Arts, there will be hors d'oeuvres, music, wine tasting, and live and silent auctions. Please join us in a gathering of friends of Blue Mountain Wildlife to celebrate spring and make a toast to the birds whose songs and beauty enrich our lives. You need only listen and look up to the sky for inspiration from our friends On the Wing. Join in the fun at this rendezvous for the raptors! May 14, 2005, Pendleton Center for the Arts 6:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. Mark your calendar for this special "first annual" event...seating is limited! Contact Lynn Tompkins at:

**Blue Mountain Wildlife**  
**71046 Appaloosa Lane, Pendleton, OR 97801**  
**(541-278-0215)**

[www.bluemountainwildlife.org](http://www.bluemountainwildlife.org)

## 3rd Annual Wildlife Rehabilitation Seminar

### Basic Wound Management & Raptor Handling Techniques

Blue Mountain Wildlife will host the 3rd annual wildlife rehabilitation seminar April 23, 2005. This year's focus will be on basic wound management, capture and restraint of raptors, and coping beaks and talons. The morning session will include slides and lecture by Dr. Jeff Cooney at the Fellowship Hall of the First Christian Church in Pendleton. Lunch will be provided to give us an opportunity to get better acquainted and share information. The afternoon session will be a hands-on lab at the Wildlife Center with master falconer Jim Nelson and Dr. Cooney.



Participants will receive the most recent issue of *Wildlife Rehabilitation Bulletin* published by the National Wildlife Rehabilitators Association. The *Bulletin* contains a wealth of information including articles on raptor wound management, avian ophthalmology, pain management, and raptors and power lines.

#### Registration Information:

Cost for the 1-day seminar, 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. April 23<sup>rd</sup> is \$40.00 and includes lunch. A spouse may attend and share handouts for an additional \$5.00. Advanced registration is requested by April 16<sup>th</sup> to ensure an accurate count for lunch and materials. There is a maximum of 30 spaces available in the hands-on laboratory. Early registration is encouraged. Make check payable to: **Blue Mountain Wildlife**. If space is available late registrants can pay at the door, but will be charged an additional \$10 fee. For more information contact Lynn Tompkins at 541-278-0215 or [raptor@wtechlink.com](mailto:raptor@wtechlink.com)

#### April 14 Bird Club Meeting & Potluck

The Pendleton Bird Club meeting on April 14 will begin with a potluck at 6:30 p.m. at the Pendleton First Christian Church. Please bring a dish of your choice, your own plates and silverware, cups or

glasses, and serving spoons or forks. We plan to leave the basement at the church at least as tidy as it is on our arrival without anyone having to do dishes or much clean-up. Coffee will be provided.

Anyone needing additional information may contact June Whitten at [jwhitten@oregontrail.net](mailto:jwhitten@oregontrail.net) or 276-9019.

#### Bluebird Trail Monitoring

The bluebird nest boxes were cleaned out last fall and are ready for new renters. Bluebirds are already checking out the boxes for raising this year's broods.

If anyone would like to go on some short trips to monitor the boxes at Poverty Flats or Albee, please let me know. It is time to start monitoring the boxes for 2005. This is quite a simple procedure; check the area around the boxes for bluebirds or Tree Swallows and record the findings. A little later in the nesting season, we will record the number of eggs, chicks, and fledglings.

*Contributed by June Whitten*

#### West Nile Virus

West Nile Virus is a potentially deadly disease that is carried to humans, birds and animals by infected mosquitoes. The disease was first detected in North America in 1999 and has now spread to all states including Oregon. The first avian case of West Nile Virus in Oregon was confirmed in the summer of 2004 in a dead American Crow in Malheur County near the Idaho border, and the disease is expected to spread into our area this summer (2005). West Nile Virus has been identified in over 100 species of birds, with the *Corvidae* family (jays, crows, ravens, magpies) seeming to be especially susceptible. In 2002 the disease in the eastern, southern and mid-western United States killed thousands of birds, including raptors. Similar mortality could occur in our area this year. Local birders should be alert for changes in bird populations, especially declines in the number of crows and magpies. Dead birds may also be observed.

The West Umatilla Vector Control District should be contacted if a dead bird is found. The District can be reached at (541) 567-5201. They may be interested in testing the bird if it is a corvid (crow, raven or magpie), freshly dead, intact and dead by natural causes. Birds should be picked up using rubber gloves (or put your hands in plastic bags). Double bag the bird in plastic and place in the garbage, unless otherwise instructed by the District.

Additional information can be obtained by calling the Nile Virus Hotline 1-866-703-4639, or by contacting the Umatilla County Department of Health at (541) 278-5432.

*Contributed by Dave Herr*

## Bringing in the “New Year”

*kon-Ka-reeeee, kon-Ka-reeeee* rings out in the early morning mist from across the water. That sound can mean only one thing: Red-winged Blackbirds are bringing in the “new year” from atop the tules at Mission Ponds.

Plant life is also awakening from its winter slumber. Willows along the shoreline and on the island are bursting forth with fresh new leaves. Cottonwood buds in the thicket will open soon to set their “cotton” adrift with each passing breeze. Blackberry vines along the east shore are setting their first leaves in preparation for this year’s berry crop which should feed many hungry mouths.

Bird life is awakening too — both in number and diversity. Of course waterfowl numbers predominate this time of year as migrants move through but soon to follow will be shorebirds and Passerines (perching birds).

The Mallard population has largely migrated northward by now, but many mated pair remain. Given spring’s early arrival this year, Mallard nesting activity (perhaps *all* bird nesting activity) may start sooner than normal. Excellent nesting conditions exist for waterfowl at the ponds this year...look for a good to excellent hatch.

A sizeable number of American Wigeon use the ponds on their northern flight, but this time of year Ring-necked Duck occasionally outnumber the wigeon. Glass the flocks carefully and you might spot Redhead or — if you are lucky — Canvasback and Ruddy Duck.

Canada Geese have also paired off by now and will soon mate prior to building their down-covered nests beneath the willows on the island. Last season we counted more than 20 goslings from multiple nest sites. At 10 to 12 pounds, Canada Geese are easily the largest nesting birds at the ponds.

At the opposite end of the size spectrum is one of the smallest nesting waterfowl — Blue-winged Teal. These teal generally arrive in late May. Last spring a lone Blue-winged Teal hen chose the ponds to raise

her brood (the first time this species was reported to nest at the ponds), and we hope she returns to try again this year. Add a few elegant species such as Wood Duck and Hooded Merganser and the show can get pretty spectacular.

As soon as the cottonwood trees in the thicket (and alder in the river bottom) set their leaves we can expect to see a wide range of bird species pass through or settle down to raise their families. Local nesting birds might include Northern Flicker, Killdeer, Black-headed Grosbeak, Yellow-headed Blackbird, Eastern Kingbird, Western Wood-Pewee, Yellow Warbler, both House and Bewick’s Wren and, just possibly, the elusive Black-chinned Hummingbird.

If there is one negative on the horizon this year it might be what affect our continuing drought will have on our bird population. Grass and weed species will not grow vigorously under stress conditions, thus fewer insects and seeds will be available for hungry mouths.

However, birds are very adaptable and an offset in one population often results in an opportunity for another population. When the water level at the ponds drops in late summer (as it often does), it concentrates food as well as foraging habitat for both wading and shorebirds. In addition, fish concentrations at the pond benefit fledgling Osprey which need to hone their fishing skills before migrating south.

Who knows — this may be the best year yet for viewing birds at the ponds! So come on out to experience the “New Year”. Always something going on around Mission Ponds.

*Contributed by Jack Simons*

## February-March Bird Sightings

Wow, it’s now officially spring. Although it seems with all the warm weather we’ve been having, spring should have started a month ago. Clearly early migrants are starting to return as evidenced by all the new “County-year birds” that are being reported. However, some of our old winter friends are still around. On February 27, Mike and MerryLynn Denny reported seeing 3 **BLUE JAYS** in Athena and on March 9, Jean Wood reported seeing 7 **BLUE JAYS** near McKay Community Park. The Pilot Rock **EURASIAN COLLARED-DOVES** have also been present throughout the report period.

Birding February 20, Bob and Dannel Tapley had a great day finding 36 species, including several **Bald Eagles** and 25 **Black-crowned Night-Herons** at McNary Wildlife Area. Dolly Robison reported seeing a **GREAT EGRET** near Stanfield the same day. Birding at McNary Wildlife Area on February 21, Craig and Judy Corder found the previously reported female **LONG-TAILED DUCK** and female **HARLEQUIN DUCK**, as well as a **Western Gull**, **Hermit Thrush** and **Western Screech Owl**. On February 22 while looking for the **LONG-TAILED DUCK** at the grain elevators above McNary Dam, Neil Hinds found a **EURASIAN WIGEON** and a **Canvasback**. Margaret LaFaive, a Portland birder, spent several days birding in our area February 21 – 23, finding a number of great birds. At Cold Springs Reservoir she found a **Varied Thrush**, **Mountain Chickadee**, **White-throated Sparrow** and **Lincoln Sparrow**. Sorting through a **White-crowned Sparrow** flock near Pilot Rock she was able to find 2 **HARRIS'S SPARROWS**.

February 22, J. Harry Krueger, an Idaho birder, found a number of good birds as he drove along I-84. Harry reported several **Cackling Geese** as well as the year's first **Tricolored Blackbird** near Stanfield. Driving near Meacham, he observed a flock of 5 **BAND-TAILED PIGEONS**. This was a great sighting since this species has only previously been found in the County a few times. On February 25, Sharon Simons reported 8 **Wood Ducks** on the pond by their home. Also on the 25, Craig and Judy reported a **Herring Gull** below McNary Dam. On February 26, Craig and Judy reported the year's first **Pine Siskins** in Hermiston. On February 25, Bob and Dannel Tapley birded several areas in Umatilla County. At the Ukiah sewage ponds they found a lone swan that Bob finally decided was a **Tundra Swan**. In the Ukiah area they also reported finding several **Rough-legged Hawks**, a pair of **Golden Eagles** and a **Bald Eagle** flying over Battle Mountain. Bob also reported finding several nesting **Red-tailed Hawks** and **Great Horned Owls** on the trip. Aaron found the first **Rock Wren** of the year February 26, as it sang from the cliffs west of Pilot Rock. February 27, Bob and Dannel checked out several of the nesting **Great Horned Owls** they had located previously in the Holdman area. They also found a **Varied Thrush** at the McNary Wildlife Area. In addition to the Blue Jays reported previously, Mike and Merrylynn reported finding 4 **Mountain Chickadees** and 2 **Bohemian Waxwings** in Athena on February 27. The same day, Craig and

Judy Corder found 43 species at Cold Springs including a **EURASIAN WIGEON**, 2 **Orange-crowned Warblers** and a **Lincoln's Sparrow**. Birding on the 27<sup>th</sup>, Aaron and Jack Simons found a single **Greater White-fronted Goose** along the Columbia River. In the same area they also found 2 **Glaucous-winged Gulls**, a **Herring Gull** and a **Western Gull**. They found a **Short-eared Owl** along Mud Springs Canyon road. March 5, Aaron reported 2 **Pileated Woodpeckers** at Battle Mountain State Park and a **Western Bluebird** near one of the nest boxes. A **Mountain Bluebird** was found south of Albee and an **American Dipper** was singing at the Cable Creek Road Bridge across Camas Creek. The same day, Craig and Judy reported finding a **Dunlin** at Cold Springs. Searching for Cackling Geese on March 5, Dolly Robison found the first **American Avocet** of the season near Stanfield Meadows. March 6, Aaron reported finding 6 **Violet-green Swallows** near Nolin, a **Savannah Sparrow** near Hermiston and 2 **Greater Yellowlegs** in a flooded field along Emert Road. Birding in the Blue Mountains near Tollgate on March 6, Mike and MerryLynn reported three calling **Northern Pygmy Owls**. Along Lincton Mountain road they found 6 **Mountain Bluebirds** and heard a calling **Great Horned Owl**.

Birding at Cold Springs March 8, Craig and Judy found 2 **Tree Swallows**, a male **Yellow-headed Blackbird** and 50 **Sandhill Cranes** flying overhead. On March 9, in addition to the Blue Jays, Jean Wood saw a small flock of **Tundra Swans** flying over McKay Community Park and later in the evening had 2 very vocal **Western Screech Owls** calling in her yard. Highlights of the PBC March 12 field trip are reported in a separate article but along with many other species the first **Long-billed Curlews** of the year were noted on the trip. Birding at Mission Ponds on March 12, Bob and Dannel found 2 **Bald Eagle**, 2 **GREAT EGRETS** and several **Great Blue Herons**. March 13, Craig and Judy found 2 **Long-billed Curlews** and 4 **Greater Yellowlegs** at Stanfield Meadows. On March 14, Mike and MerryLynn Denny reported finding 2 **Long-billed Curlews** south of Barns Road in Umatilla County near the state line. On March 15 Craig made a great find. Along with 10 **Cackling Geese** at the freeway ponds at exit 182, "Buttercreek" west of Stanfield, he found two **TRUMPETER SWANS** with a **Tundra Swan**. **TRUMPETER SWANS** are seldom found in the county. On March 18, Neil Hinds reported the year's first **Black-neck Stilt** in a pond near Power City Wildlife Area.

With spring now here, migratory birds will begin arriving in greater numbers. Please continue to send your bird sightings to me, Dave Herr at 276-6413 or [dsherr@oregontrail.net](mailto:dsherr@oregontrail.net).

*Editor for March: John Norman*  
*Newsletter Editor: Position Vacant*  
*Email: [janorman@uci.net](mailto:janorman@uci.net)*

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